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Lastly, the author fails to instruct us how, in states whose governmental institutions already rest upon universal suffrage and territorial representation, his system can ever come to application; and it is for such states that it is intended. His object is, through it, to get the power out of the hands of the lower classes, who by the system of universal suffrage are in the majority. The only *legal* way to secure the realization of his proposition, therefore, is through the voluntary surrender of that power by these classes. It is not to be expected that they will do this consciously. It is hardly to be expected that they can be brought to it through deception. There would remain then only the method of *coup d'état*,—a method indeed of practical politics at times, but not of political science.

JOHN W. BURGESS.

*American Statesmen. The Life of Thomas Hart Benton.* By THEODORE ROOSEVELT. Boston and New York, Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1887.— 372 pp.

The thirteen volumes of this series that have preceded Mr. Roosevelt's have presented in general lines that view of our political history prior to 1850 which it is fashionable rather than popular to hold at the present day. In respect to party principles, the standpoint of the series is mildly federalistic. In judging the great men who are the subjects of its biographies, the various contributors are in substantial accord on general characteristics, though diverging more or less on special points. It is assumed as axiomatic, for example, that Jefferson was a tricky, treacherous politician of the baser sort; Madison, an administrative imbecile; Jackson, a stubborn, hot-headed ignoramus, whose only virtue was embodied in his threat to hang the nullifiers; and Webster, a demigod up to the 7th of March, 1850. Mr. Roosevelt's book exhibits all these earmarks of the series. While nominally a life of Benton, it is practically a history of United States politics from 1820 to 1850, with an explanation of the Missouri statesman's position in reference to each of the great questions that arose during that period. From Benton's devotion to Jackson, he became the doughtiest champion of that old hero against the combined assaults of what is generally considered our greatest political trio,—Clay, Calhoun, and Webster. Mr. Roosevelt makes much of his book a study in comparative reputations, seeking, and often with considerable show of success, to establish for Benton a claim to equal rank with the famous three. The general result of the study seems to be that Benton was in all respects the peer of Clay, and, while perhaps not intellectually equal to Webster or Calhoun, yet more honest and consistent than the former, and infinitely more patriotic than the

latter. Mr. Roosevelt cannot accept the rather touching and romantic picture of Calhoun which Von Holst has drawn in both biography and general history. The South Carolinian was always an object of special detestation to Benton, and Benton's biographer shares the feeling.

It is not, however, in the history of the bank war, nullification, and the other political issues of Benton's day that Mr. Roosevelt's book is particularly valuable. This part of the work contains little that is new either in respect to the general historical facts or in respect to Benton's connection with them, and no such attention is devoted to personal and private characteristics as should distinguish the biography of a man from the history of his times. The author indulges in frequent flights of airy judgment on the men and matters of the days he is describing, roundly rates his hero and others for violations of the maxims which have come to be accepted by a certain class of dilettante politicians of the present decade, and sounds sapient notes of warning for the statesmen of to-day. But the really important feature of the book is its treatment of the sectional question. The author's own experience on the modern frontier of our progress westward has doubtless contributed much to the admirable judgment which he gives as to the character of the early West. Taking Benton as an exceptionally developed type of the rude but robust trans-Appalachian civilization, he brings into proper light, as is rarely done, the early antagonism between that civilization and the more advanced stage on the eastern coast. He shows that this antagonism prevailed to the south as well as to the north of Mason and Dixon's line, though in a less degree, and he displays Benton and Clay as the representatives of the West in the two great parties, insisting upon her interests to any extent that would not imperil the union. In the whole sectional controversy Roosevelt is a healthy antidote to Von Holst. The latter can see no influence behind the acquisition of western territory that can be at all compared with that of the "slave-barons." Mr. Roosevelt claims—and no one not looking in the light of a preconceived theory will gainsay it—that both Texas and California were won by the West, and would have been so won had slavery never existed. The "manifest destiny" slogan was more effective than that of "more slave territory."

Mr. Roosevelt's general estimate of Benton's character and attainments is not widely different from that generally accepted. Of absolute personal integrity, strong-headed, self-willed, industrious, pompous, and vain, his self-esteem and pugnacity, backed by a very respectable acquaintance with historical and legal literature, made him a formidable foe for those whose intellectual fibre was finer but less strong. The rather amusing quality of the eloquence that could be expected from such a character is well noted by his biographer. It is perhaps a little unfortunate, however, that a tendency to pleonasm (as displayed in the

boast that he engaged in a certain task "solitary and alone") should be criticised in a work in which a panic is described as "one of the least simple and most complex of mercantile phenomena," and Clay is referred to as "the nominal and titular leader of the Whigs." Many other instances suggest that Mr. Roosevelt's study of his hero's style has been thorough if not altogether profitable.

WM. A. DUNNING.

*American Commonwealths. New York.* By ELLIS H. ROBERTS.  
Boston and New York, Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1887.—2 vols.  
12mo, 758 pp.

This book is a source of great disappointment to all those who expected that the volume dealing with New York in the American Commonwealth series would supply that long-felt want, a trustworthy monograph on the history of the state from the Dutch supremacy to the present day. There are numerous excellent works on limited periods, there are many good local histories, the state government has been most munificent in publishing all documents casting light upon our colonial annals, but Mr. Roberts is the first to attempt the task of welding all this material into a form which, while succinct, shall omit nothing of importance. In this he has failed.

In the first place, he has mapped out his work wrongly, devoting attention and space to the different periods of New York history in something very like inverse ratio to their importance. He gives almost one-fourth of his 740 pages to the discussion of the Dutch period (1609-1664), and but 90 pages to the history of the commonwealth during the last thirty years, with all the important events of the war, the questions arising therefrom, and the attempts at reform in state and municipal government.

Again, the book is unsystematic; facts are strung together without regard for chronological order or philosophic sequence. An example of this is found in the relation of the conflict which secured to the colony liberty of the press. The author devotes a chapter (xvii) to the Zenger libel prosecution, which had no important political result. But he merely mentions without comment (page 310), the decisive struggle over the question between Governor Clinton and the assembly in the Parker case. The governor had forbidden the public printer to publish an account of the proceedings of the assembly; but that body asserted and maintained the position that "it is the right of the people to know the proceedings of their representatives," and that "the governor's attempt to prohibit the printing of their proceedings is arbitrary and illegal."